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Citation for final published version:

Jones, Raya ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5419-677X> 2018. After postmodernism, technologism. *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 50 (14) , pp. 1619-1620. 10.1080/00131857.2018.1461398 file

Publishers page: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2018.1461398>
<<https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2018.1461398>>

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After Postmodernism, Technologism

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Contemplating what comes after postmodernism we find ourselves like Walter Benjamin's angel of history, inspired by Klee's painting *Angelus Novus*. A violent storm blows from Paradise, irresistibly propelling the angel into the future to which his back is turned, while before him a pile of debris grows skyward; 'This storm is what we call progress.' (Benjamin 2003: 393). Likewise, the debris of past -isms grows skywards before us, piled upon with new post-, trans- and post-posts that take shape against the background of what has come before them.

If Benjamin's angel is caught by the storm mid-air, we are caught afloat on a tidal surge of technological progress. Interface technologies that enable fast-forwarding and rewinding, skipping, surfing channels and browsing the internet, bring about the collapse of narrative at a prosaic, pervasive and almost imperceptible level. Digital technology is fast becoming our cultural landscape, altering human experience and consequently changing zeitgeist and weltanschauung. Digital technology has begun to affect people's conception of themselves in relation to others and institutions (Rushkoff 2013). New intimacies with machines are creating what Turkle (2011) calls 'tethered' selves, subjects wired into social existence through technology. Our back is turned to the future, our gaze is fixed on the past, but under our feet technologism swells.

Technologism denotes belief in the power of technology to improve society and human lives. As deployed here, it implies also technology-driven practices and contingent circumstances. Institutional technologism imposes new modes of teaching and learning. Willingly or dragged kicking and screaming, educators are coerced into 'tethered' teaching. Students are inculcated into 'tethered' learning. We become epistemic subjects wired into flipped classrooms, blended learning, and virtual learning environments replete with podcasts, lecture captures, sidebars and top menus. Students can dip and delve, skip and surf the syllabus. Technologism in education prompts de facto postnarrative curricula and modes of delivery bereft of Socratic midwifery, with implications for the future of knowledge.

Theory, says Eagleton (2016) apropos literature, is the point at which a practice is ‘forced into a new form of self-reflectiveness, taking itself as an object of its own inquiry.’ The term technologism may be widened to include a scholarly stance that is fired by the impact of technologies, and underpins fields of inquiry such as science and technology studies, postphenomenology and posthumanism. Further to paraphrase Eagleton’s characterization of theory, such a stance may enter philosophy of education as a ‘systematic reflection on the assumptions, procedures and conventions’ that govern technology-driven educational practice.

We theorize what comes after postmodernism. But if we glance down at the tidal surge carrying us, we may ponder what is the future of critical inquiry itself—of systematic self-reflection that by necessity articulates itself in narrative—when digital natives, having grown into postnarrativity, become the next generation of scholars and educators.

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